

St. Michael's Church

Elizabeth, Pa.

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AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

1908

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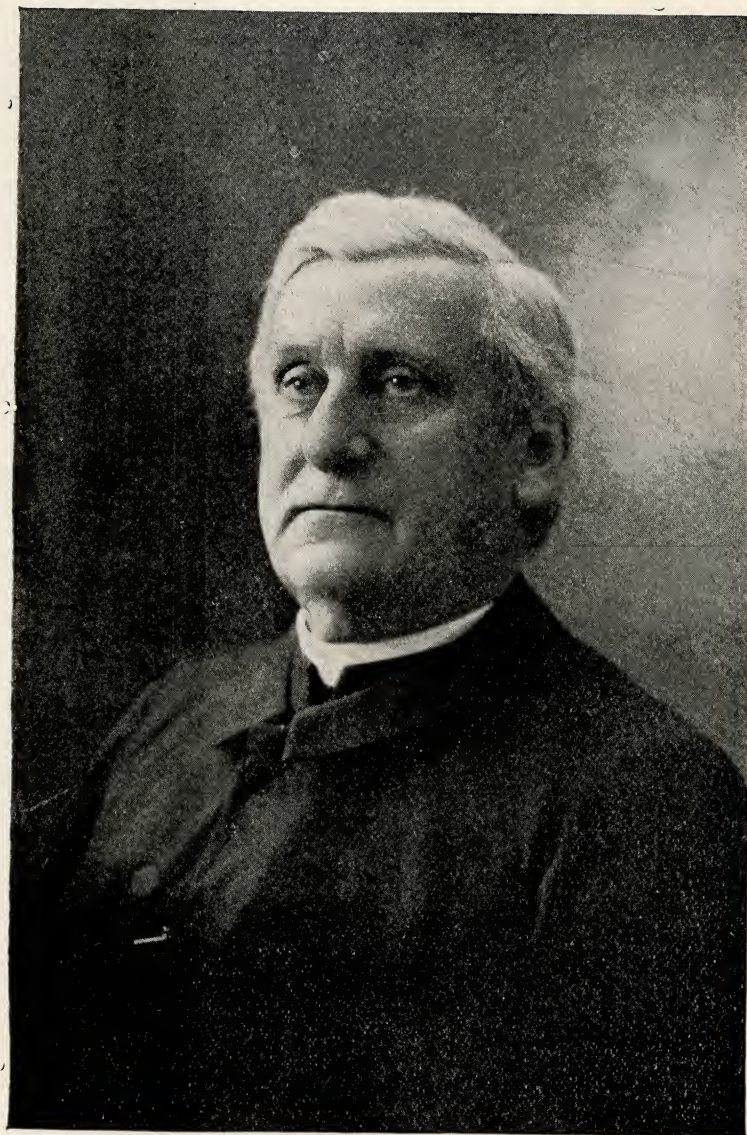
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Rev. L. A. Lambert, LL. D.

## **A Sketch of What Took Place in Elizabeth in "Ye Olden Days".**

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BY REV. L. A. LAMBERT.

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Rev. Dear Father:

After fifty-four years my recollections of the early Catholic and other events in Elizabeth are somewhat obscure. But at your request I will try to recall some of them. I left Elizabeth to go to St. Vincent's, Latrobe, in 1853, and, excepting three or four short visits, I have not been in the old town since. The first priest I remember to have come to Elizabeth was the venerable Father Michael Gallagher, who came down from Brownsville, which was the centre of his large missionary field. That was in 1844, when I was nine years old. Two events of that year have clung to my memory during the long interval, the coming of the priest and the presidential election in the fall of 1844. A strange association of ideas, except that the two events happened about the same time, and were impressed on the same mental kodak negative, and there they remain, linked together.

The youngsters were as enthusiastic in the presidential canvass as their parents, and were divided into Democrats and Whigs. It was a great time for glee clubs and the boys had theirs as well as the men. The Democrat boys sang and shouted for Polk, Dallas and Shunk, and the Whig boys did the same for Clay and Frelinghuysen. Shunk was the Democratic candidate for governor. A story went the rounds about him, or his daughter, who said to her mother, "Mother, when Dad is elected governor will we all be governors?" "No, child," answered the fond mother, "only myself and your father." This makes me realize the thought

of the old monk in Walter Scott's Abbot. "How strange," he said, as he hummed some words of an old tune, "how strange that little things stick to the memory like burrs to a beggar's rags."

I remember well going with the Democratic boys to the hill just above the upper boatyard to gather poke root that flourished luxuriantly there. We daubed our cheeks with the juice of the red berries, and with the stalks swinging over our shoulders, marched double file through the main street singing,

"Polk root is pizen,  
To kill old Clay and Freelinghyzen,"

and looked daggers at any Whig boy we met in our triumphal march. Where are those boys now? There was Jim and Joe and Dick Stephens, and Dave Graham, and Joe Taylor, and Jim Galloway, and Sam Collins, and Jim Story, and Ike Cunningham, and Sam and Jim Kirby, and Jim Geevish, the Oliver boys, Sy Mounts and all the rest of them. Where are they now? Some are in their graves, and the living are scattered to the four points of the compass. It is as Charles Lamb sang:

"I have had playmates, I have had companions,  
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days;  
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces."

Then came the Mexican War, and the recruiting sargent, with his drummer and fifer, who made his headquarters at Taylor's Tavern near the wharf, and represented the war as a jolly picnic, just the thing for adventurous spirits and undeveloped Napoleons and Caesars, who would march through the balmy South and never halt till they stacked their arms in the Halls of Montezuma; and then return loaded with gold and glory. "Come on, boys, and take a drop before you join the serried ranks of Uncle Sam and have the girls

weeping admiring tears as you march, march away to the tune of 'The Girl I Left Behind Me.' I'll never drink another drop till I return from Mexico." How sorry we boys were that we were too young to enlist and march, march away to the Halls of Montezuma!

Then we began to hear news of the operations of Gen. Zach. Taylor on the Rio Grande, against the Mexican Generals Ampudia and Avista, and the battles of Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, etc.

It was a law in our house that we youngsters had to be at home at 8 or half past in the evening. Any breach of this law meant to the delinquent an a posteriori argument, called in the parlance of the time a "licking," which was one of the few things we never considered as a joke. One of us (I need not be more definite) loitered within hearing of some men who were gossiping about the war. Some one said Taylor had taken Saltillo. On hearing this, and recognizing the lateness of the hour and the possible consequence, he devised a little scheme by which he hoped to save his bacon. He started on a run home, burst open the door, rushed in and shouted with all his might: "General Taylor has taken Saltillo." All other conversation stopped suddenly. The thoughts of all were beyond the Rio Grande. The overdue time was forgotten in the enthusiasm of the moment. Some one said, "Who's Sal Tillo?" "She's a town," said the schemer, as he edged his way obliquely towards the stairs leading to his bedroom. He kept the palm of his hand over his mouth so that no one heard him snicker at the success of his neat little scheme.

The war excitement was ended by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. But two other events supplied its place and kept up a feverish interest, the discovery of gold in California and the Rochester Knockings, or Spirit Rappings. The first stirred the adventurous, the second gave the village philosophers and wiseacres a rich field for speculation in the occult. The main question

was, how the spirits could communicate with those on earth. Many solutions were brought forward, but that suggested by the old postmaster seemed to be the most practical. He thought they might communicate through the Dead Letter Office.

Most of what I have been telling is perhaps of little interest to-day, but they were the things that kept the people awake in the drowsy little village of Elizabeth sixty years ago.

But you will say my memory is playing the vagrant and wandering from the subject of interest to St. Michael's congregation. It must plead guilty to the impeachment, but as up the stream of time one turns the sail memory is wafted by the changing gale, and idles where it listeth.

Let us then return to Father Gallagher, whom we left abruptly some paragraphs back. Next to the presidential election his arrival was the great event of 1844. So vivid was the impression he made on my memory that I can, while writing this, see his benevolent features as distinctly as if his photograph were before me. He was a large, serious faced, bald headed man. He wore a long black coat, and carried a large carpetbag containing the vestments, as I later learned. As my father's house was the only—and I think the first Catholic home in Elizabeth at that time—the priest took up his lodging with us. The house stood where the new Methodist church now stands. Two or three Catholic families living at the coal mines just above Lock No. 3, near Pangburns hollow, were notified. Next morning Father Gallagher heard confessions, and celebrated Mass on the bureau. When Mass was over and while the priest was removing and folding his vestments the few present went up quietly and placed their offering on the corner of the bureau and went their way homeward. Besides a solid instruction on Catholic duties at the Gospel, this was the usual proceeding when Fr. Gallagher came, which was three or four times a year. It was

during his time, I think, the lot on which the church stands was procured—a gift from Samuel Walker. When Fr. Gallagher discontinued his visits the place was attended occasionally by Father Hoeres of McKeesport, and after him by priests from Pittsburg, Fathers Powers, Kenny, Larkin, Tracy and McGowan. The church was begun under Father McGowan's administration. The mason work was done by Mr. Richards and the carpenter work by John Anderson.

Great was the day when it was sufficiently advanced to have divine service in it and Bishop O'Connor was to come and bless it. For days before the women were busy ornamenting the altar and fixing things in order. John Blaine and I were appointed altar boys, and felt fully the importance and responsibility of our new position. What gave us the greatest concern was to know how to say the Confiteor and when to ring the bell. John's mother, Mrs. Blaine, not being able on account of rheumatism to help the other women in the church, offered to make the cassocks for the altar boys. So we went to her room and stood up near the chair of the rheumatic cripple to have her take our measures. And then we called now and again as the work progressed to try how the cassocks fit as they assumed cognizable shape. They were not, of course, in the highest style of sartorial art. They were as narrow at the feet as at the shoulders, and fitted us as neatly as gun covers. They were very well to stand still in, but as no allowance was made for locomotion we were not responsible for the tripping and stumbling on the altar steps, to the distraction and disedification of the pious worshippers. They did not understand the complex problem we were trying to solve,—that of how to move about gracefully and with dignity with our feet spancellor. With all our strenuous efforts we never succeeded in solving it. When Mrs. Blaine fitted on the finished cassocks she made a remark that I have never forgotten. As she fondly gazed with artistic pride and pose of head on her accomplished task, she said, "Now, if either of you

boys ever becomes a priest, I want you to remember I made your first cassock." I have complied with her request.

When the day came and the Bishop came into the church all was stir and bustle and running hither and thither, during which John and I managed with aggravating success to be in everybody's way—our minds being on the Confiteor and the bell, to both of which we were resolved to do justice when the time came. Father Hoeres said Mass before the Mass of Ceremony began, which gave us opportunity for a test of our abilities in view of the coming solemnities. We got through the Confiteor with flying colors. But the bell, ah! the bell, that was quite another matter. We knew when we got through the Confiteor, but we did not know when we were through with the bell. It was on John's side, and he followed the idea that if he rang it all the time he would be sure to hit the right places. So every movement of the priest was accompanied by the music of the bell. When the priest came into the sacristy he gave us special instructions, not when to ring the bell, but when not to ring it. So far as it depended on us the subsequent ceremony proceeded with but a few stumbles and trips on our part.

After the church was finished the priest's visits were more frequent and regular. As I left for school about that time my knowledge of subsequent events is from hearsay.







New Church, Elizabeth, Pa.





Rear of New Church, Elizabeth, Pa.

## Saint Michael's Church, Elizabeth, Pa.

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### An Historical Sketch.

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BY REV. A. A. LAMBING, LL. D.

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It seems fitting that in presenting an historical sketch of a church so long established as the one that is now engaging our attention a brief outline of the history of the Monongahela valley should be given by way of introduction. And it appears to be in a measure demanded, both to refresh the memory of the older residents and to give the younger an insight into the history of one of the most interesting valleys from every point of view in our great country; for, while its development in the present simply astounds the world, its scenes and incidents in the past have had no little to do with the building up of our great republic.

Let us begin, then, with the name *Monongahela*. It is corrupted, or improved, if you prefer it, from the Delaware Indian word *Menaungehilla*, which means, according to the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder, "high banks or bluffs, breaking off and falling down in places." Like most streams flowing through a hilly country such as Western Pennsylvania, the Monongahela must have presented a very pleasing appearance to the pioneer or trader who paddled his canoe down its placid waters, before the hand of man had marred its natural beauty. But it could not compete with its better half of the Ohio, the Allegheny, which even the unimaginative children of the forest designated by excellence "the Beautiful River." I shall not pause to speculate on the aboriginal tribes that were found on the banks of the river at and before the arrival of the pale faces.

Among the natural products of the soil were all those kinds of trees, shrubery and other natural growths peculiar to this latitude; and also savage tribes of different kinds who were at times very troublesome, as our fathers often learned to their cost, and wild animals little less savage than the red man. The discovery of coal, natural gas, etc., were of a later date. So, too, was another natural product, Hon. James G. Blaine, who, while he shed lustre not only on the valley of his birth, but also on the country at large, shed very little on the Church of his ancestors; although his brother John with young Louis A. Lambert, now Rev. L. A. Lambert, the able editor of the New York *Freeman's Journal*, were the first altar boys to serve in the church at Elizabeth, Mrs. Blaine making their outfit. Another noted production of the valley was John A. Brashear, LL. D., the noted astronomer and manufacturer of astronomical instruments, who was born in Brownsville in the latter part of 1840.

A noted Indian chief, Nemacholin, lived near the site of Brownsville before the middle of the eighteenth century, when the first traders crossed the mountains to traffic with the aborigines. It was he who guided Colonel Cresap across the mountains to establish a trading post on the banks of the Monongahela, and the path or trail which they followed from the mouth of Will's creek, now the site of Cumberland, Maryland, was long known as Nemacolin's Path. It was one of the most noted Indian trails of that section of the country, and was followed more or less closely by General Braddock in his unfortunate expedition as far as the top of the Chestnut ridge, and later by the National Road. The creek which enters the Monongahela immediately above Brownsville was long known as Nemacolin's creek, but in time its name was changed to Dunlap's creek from another Indian trader who settled at its mouth. But however interesting these points may be, we cannot pause to dwell upon them.

The first military occupation of the Valley of the





Interior of New St. Michael's Church, Elizabeth, Pa.

Monongahela was taken by Captain William Trent for the Ohio Company, who built a large storehouse, almost a fortification, at Brownsville, in February, 1754. In the journal of Coulon de Villieres, who commanded the French in the encounter with Washington at Fort Necessity, early in the following July, it is referred to under date of June 30, of the same year in these words: "Came to the hangard,"—as he named the storehouse,—“which was a sort of fort built with logs, one upon another, well knotted in, about thirty feet in length and twenty in width.” But the first permanent settler in the valley was the Scotch trader and gunsmith, John Frazier, whom the French under Captain Celoron had driven from the mouth of French creek in the summer of 1749, where he had established a trading post and ingratiated himself with the Indians by his skill in repairing their firearms. Driven from there he settled at the mouth of Turtle Creek, the present Braddock, and carried on the same trades until he was finally expelled by the French after their occupation of the confluence of the Allegheny and Ohio rivers and the building of Fort Duquesne. In the latter part of 1759, after the expulsion of the French from the valley of the Ohio, Col. James Burd was sent by Col. Henry Bouquet from Carlisle to build a fort at the mouth of Redstone creek, just below the present Brownsville, and leave in it a garrison of twenty-five men, an order which he faithfully carried out. This fort served the purpose of a frontier stronghold, and it also marked an important step in the permanent occupation of the territory.

Time wore on and the country west of the mountains became better known, its advantages more highly appreciated, and notwithstanding the constant danger from Indian raids on the frontier, the valley of the Monongahela as well as the southwestern part of the state in general, was ere long dotted with log cabins. Brownsville and Pittsburg began to attain considerable importance as objective points both for the settlers of the immediate vicinity and also for persons making for

the lower countries of Kentucky and Illinois. But soon there was another point on the Monongahela that attracted attention owing mainly to the enterprise and public spirit of Stephen Bayard; and this brings us to our proper subject, the town of Elizabeth.

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## II.

### ELIZABETH.

Elizabeth is the oldest town in Allegheny County, with the exception of Pittsburg. Stephen Bayard, just mentioned, married Elizabeth Mackay, daughter of Col. Aeneas Mackay, a noted leader of the frontier soldiers; and having purchased large tracts of land on the east bank of the Monongahela, had a township formed which he named in honor of his wife. Later he laid out a town on the bank of the river twenty-two miles above, that is, south, of Pittsburg, which he named Elizabeth-town, for the same reason. The tract of land upon which it, or at least a considerable part of it stands, was known as "Greenock," and was originally secured by a warranty title, in 1769, by one Donald Monroe, from whom, it would appear, Mr. Bayard secured it. The following advertisement, which appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal* of Philadelphia, January 13, 1788, enumerates the advantages claimed for the new town: "Elizabeth Town on the River Monongahela, (where formerly the new store stood.)—This town is situated on the east side of the said river, between Rodstone Old Fort and Pittsburg, twenty miles above the latter by water and fifteen by land. The roads from the lower counties lead directly through it to Washington and Wheeling. The best and most direct road over the Hills,"—the Allegheny mountains,— "is from Carlisle, called 'The Old Pennsylvania Road,' beginning at Clarke's Gap, from thence to Bedford, thence to Lionier, thence to Greensburg, thence to Brown's Ferry on Yough, and from thence to Elizabeth Town, and down the Monongahela, via Montmorin (or Logstown)"





Rectory of St. Michael's Church, Elizabeth, Pa.

—about the present Ambridge, some eighteen miles below Pittsburg on the north bank of the Ohio,—“ a nearer and better circuit than Fort Pitt to Muskingum, Kentucky, etc. . . . Boats of every dimension may be had at Elizabeth Town, in the course of next summer, at as short notice and on as easy terms as at any place on said river. The situation of the town is attended with this singular advantage, that there is water sufficient for boats to go down from it into the Ohio at any season of the year. It possesses, likewise, another advantage, from its being surrounded by a rich and thickly settled country, where provisions of all kinds may be had at a very cheap rate, particularly flour, there being no less than six grist-mills within the circumference of three or four miles. Proposals will be received and attended to by Stephen Bayard at Philadelphia, and by Bayard and Mackay, proprietors, at Pittsburg.” In another advertisement of about the same time Mr. Bayard informs the public that he has engaged at Philadelphia, and sent on, two expert boat-builders who will look after the proper construction of river craft for such persons as may stand in need of their services. Elizabeth was not, however, incorporated as a borough until April 5, 1834, when the population was perhaps a thousand. Like most towns in the Monongahela valley, Elizabeth has from early times been noted for its trade in coal; but it is not so noted as most of its later rivals for its manufacturing industries; indeed, it lays little claim to distinction in that line, and gives but indifferent promises for the immediate future. Its present population is about 2500.

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#### RELIGIOUS HISTORY.

Catholics settled in the river valley and adjacent country from Brownsville to Pittsburg before the close of the eighteenth century, but in small numbers hardly sufficient to form the nucleus of congregations till many years after; and they were occasionally ministered to

by a priest from Brownsville or Pittsburg, and at times also by traveling missionaries going to Kentucky or the Illinois country, who were delayed occasionally awaiting the building of a boat or a rise in the river. When their numbers had sufficiently increased to form regular missionary stations at various places, they were visited at fixed times generally by one of the priests from St. Paul's, Pittsburg, and were commonly known as "the river missions." Time wore on, and the Catholic population increased, especially after the coal trade began to assume its present gigantic proportions. The first information we possess of the formation of a congregation at Elizabeth is in the year 1849, when, and for perhaps two years longer, the mission was visited by Rev. Nickolas Hoeres, of McKeesport. The building of a church was soon after undertaken, and upon its completion it was dedicated under the invocation of the Archangel St. Michael, September 28, 1851. It is an unassuming brick structure about 60 feet in length by 35 in width, surmounted by a small belfry, and having a little sacristy attached to the rear; and it occupies a commanding position on an elevation in the back part of the town. The congregation was then placed under the care of the pastor of Brownsville, who visited it generally on one Sunday in the month. This arrangement continued for a time, longer or shorter, of which we have not been able to secure reliable information; for no records were kept in the mission itself,—but only at the churches from which it was attended,—till 1855. In that year regular registers of baptisms and marriages began to be kept at the church, and it is from these, giving the first and last date upon which the name of each successive pastor appears, that the following sketch is principally based. The first name that appears is that of Rev. Richard Phelan,—from May 13 to October 13, 1855,—of whom mention will be made later on, who visited the church from the Cathedral at Pittsburg; and from that time the church





**Church Committee**

Thomas Hunt      Francis McNeil      D. G. White  
Rev. C. Fallon

has been favored with a resident pastor, in the following order:

1. Rev. Peter M. Garvey,—from November 3, 1855, till July 1, 1860. He was born in Ireland early in July, 1826; completed his course at Bardstown, Kentucky; ordained at Cincinnati March 11, 1854, for the diocese of Pittsburg; labored on the mission in a number of places, mainly here, at St. John Gualbert's, Johnstown, and at Freeport, where he died October 22, 1881.

2. Rev. Thomas Quinn,—from July 1, 1860, till November 1, 1861. Few Particulars are known of his life.

3. Rev. Dennis Kearney,—from November 30, 1861, till January 31, 1867. He was born in County Carlow, Ireland, May 1, 1827; completed his studies at Carlow College and was ordained there June 15, 1856, for the diocese of Pittsburg, where he arrived some three months later; served principally here, at St. Joseph's, Sharpsburg, St. Paul's Cathedral, where he was rector and chancellor, and at St. Patrick's, Pittsburg, where he died April 28, 1903.

4. Rev. William F. Hayes,—from March 10, 1867, till March 5, 1871. He was born in St. Bridgid's parish, Pittsburg, August 19, 1841; completed his studies at the diocesan seminary, and was ordained December 17, 1866; pastor of Elizabeth, and New Castle; withdrew from the diocese about the beginning of February, 1879, to Columbus; was pastor of a church in that city and assistant editor of *The Catholic Columbian* till about 1884; then pastor of St. Francis Xavier's Church, Newark, in the same diocese; died June 6, 1892.

5. Rev. Martin J. Brazil,—from March 19, 1871, till October 20, 1872. He was born in Ireland about the year 1842; came to America and entered St. Michael's diocesan seminary about 1861; was a classmate of Father Hayes; left the diocese a short time before the completion of his studies, and went to Dubuque, Iowa,

where his uncle, Very Rev. John F. Brazil, was Vicar-General; returned to the diocese of Pittsburg about the beginning of 1870, and served mainly here; died at the Mercy Hospital, Pittsburg, November 9, 1873.

6. Rev. P. M. Garvey, a second time,—from December 1, 1872, till October 20, 1877. After a short interval:

7. Rev. Francis McCourt,—from December 16, 1877, till August 18, 1895. Father McCourt was born in Ireland, about 1843, but the exact place has not been ascertained, and having about finished his studies, he came to America and the diocese of Pittsburg, and was ordained August 11, 1876; served as assistant at St. John's, Altoona, and St. John Gualbert's, Johnstown, till December 1, 1877, when he was named pastor of Elizabeth; transferred to the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Connellsville, August 20, 1895, where he died November 26, 1896. He was the longest pastor of Elizabeth. After a short interval:

8. Rev. Maurice McCarthy,—from January 14, 1896, till April 10, 1907, when he was transferred at his own request to St. Clare's, Clairton, which he organized on the opposite side of the Monongahela, just a short distance below. He was born in Ireland, April 24, 1867, ordained June 24, 1892; assistant at St. Mary's, New Castle; and pastor here.

9. Rev. Celestine Fallon,—from April 4, 1907,—whom may a kind Providence long preserve. He was born in the City of Cork, Ireland, May 19, 1877; came to America when fourteen years of age on the good ship "Arizona" with his uncle, the late Very Rev. Stephen Wall, D. D., V. G.; studied at the Holy Ghost College, Pittsburg, St. Vincent's, Beatty, and St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, where he was ordained by Bishop Curtis, June 18, 1901; and was assistant at St. Peter's, McKeesport, till his present appointment.





Guy Carney

Francis McCarter

Joseph Lesky

Rev. C. Fallon

Francis Hunt

Maurice Hunt

Jerome Girt





Boys' Choir of St. Michael's Church

## IV.

One of the first moves of Father Kearney after his appointment was the purchase of a brick house near the church for his residence; which has since undergone a number of changes and improvements. He also bought a small tract of ground about half a mile from the church for a cemetery. His successor built a little frame school house, and opened a school with a lay teacher; but the congregation was so small and scattered, that it soon became evident that the time had not yet come for such a move, and it was abandoned. The congregation has had its vicissitudes, as all such populations have; but it has, notwithstanding, maintained a steady, though slow growth, and its future is likely in this respect to be similar to its past. Stations were occasionally held at different mining centers along the river, until lately, when the growth of the steel industry has dotted the shores of the river with many new towns and congregations; and the pastor of Elizabeth is permitted to confine his labors to that single parish. The most important of these out-missions was

## MONONGAHELA CITY.

Monongahela City, or Monongahela, as it is now coming to be known, is situated on the west bank of the river, about ten miles above Elizabeth, and is one of the most noted historical spots in the whole river valley, although it can only be referred to briefly here. The place was first known as "Parkison's Ferry," John Parkison having, it is said, secured a tract of land of about seventy acres, upon which a part of the city now stands, the warrant being dated August 27, 1769. It is sometimes spoken of as Southwark. At that time both Virginia and Pennsylvania laid claim to what is now the south-western part of our state, and a very bitter and long-continued dispute resulted, which was not settled till the end of 1779. Lord Dunmore was governor of Virginia, when, in the fall of 1773, an order was issued by the Pennsylvania authorities to

withdraw the garrison from Fort Pitt, owing to the peaceful dispositions of the Indians; but Dunmore immediately sent his pliant tool, Doctor John Connolly, to take possession, who began to act in a most tyrannical manner; and about April 5, 1774, when court was opened at Hannastown, about three miles north of Greensburg,—the first court held west of the mountains,—he marched upon the place and arrested all the officers connected with it. We must necessarily be brief; suffice it, then, to state, that the territory claimed by Virginia was divided into three counties, and that the section of country about Monongahela City was included in what was called Youghioghena County. A temporary seat of justice was required, and the electors were ordered to meet on December 8, 1776, at the house of Andrew Heath, on the west bank of the Monongahela river a short distance above Elizabeth, to choose the most convenient place for holding courts. They accordingly met, and selected the plantation of the same Andrew Heath; and “the court directed Thomas Smallman, John Canon and John Gibson, or any two of them, to provide a house at the public expense for the use of holding the court, and that the sheriff contract with the workmen to put the same in repair. On November 24, 1778, Kuykendall and Newall were authorized to contract with some persons to junk and daub the courthouse, and provide locks and bars for the doors of the jail, and to build an addition to the eastern end of the courthouse and jail sixteen feet square, and one story high, with good, sufficient logs, a good cobber roof, a good outside chimney, with convenient seats for the court and bar, with a sheriff’s box, a good iron pipe stove for the jail room, and that they have a pair of stocks, a whipping-post and a pillory erected in the court yard.”

As early as 1775 Dunmore had authorized James Devore to keep a ferry “from his house on the Monongahela to the mouth of Pigeon creek.” He lived on the eastern side of the river. On February 11, 1780,





Children's Choir.





A Typical Miner

Joseph Parkison secured three hundred and eighteen acres more; but the place was known amout the frontiersmen as "the mouth of Pigeon creek," or "Devore's Ferry." April 13, 1782, an act was passed by which the ferry landing of Joseph Parkison and Jacobus Devore was established "thirty perches below the mouth of Pigeon creek." Parkison kept a little store and carried on a limited trade with the surrounding county, and a postoffice was established some time before 1790. Parkison finally determined to lay out a town, which he did in 1792, the following notice of which is to be found in the *Pittsburg Gazette* of October of that year: "The subscriber has laid out a part of his farm on the Monongahela river in the county of Washington, State of Pennsylvania, at the mouth of Pigeon creek, opposite Devore's Ferry, into lots for a town, the sale of which will begin on the premises on the 15th of November next. It is needless to say much of a place of such public notoriety; yet it may not be amiss to mention that its site is equal, if not superior, to any in the county, being on the main road leading from the town of Washington, etc., to Philadelphia, and a place at present of the most public resort and advantageously situated for trade down the river," etc.

The adventure met "with little success, and about the end of the century he again laid out a town which he named Williamsburg in honor of his son William. This he advertised in the *Washington Telegraph* of July 26, 1796, stating that the lots would be sold on the 26th of August. He enlarged on the advantages of the place, and announced that the lots would be sold to the highest bidder, but that an annual ground rent of one dollar would be required. There were one hundred and four lots in the plan, and on the day of sale twenty-four were disposed of, ranging in price from \$22.00 to \$239.00; the whole aggregating \$1385.00. The town was now permanently established. On April 1, 1837, Williamsburg gave place to the present name. During the "Whiskey Insurrection," 1791-94, some of the most

important meetings were held here; and here it was that the first effectual move was made toward the final settlement of that serious trouble.

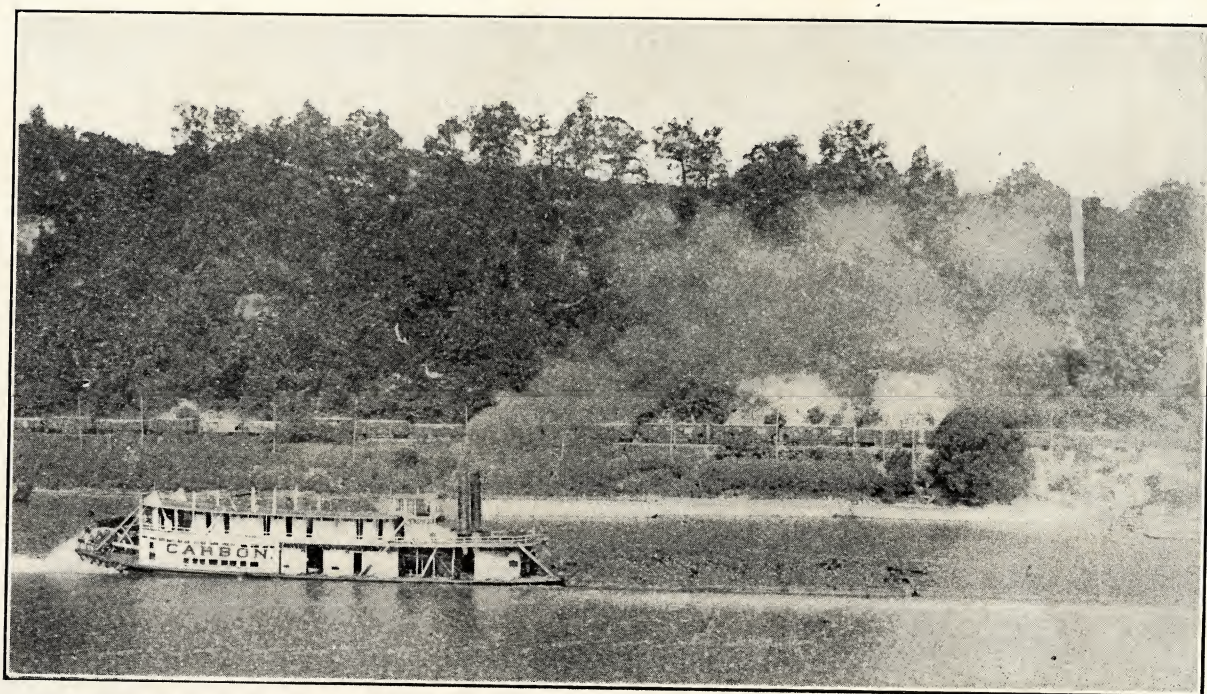
The date of the incorporation of the town as a borough has not been ascertained, but in 1840 it had a population, it is said, of 752. In 1872 it became a city, and its population at present is about 12,000. But it is time to turn to the religious history of the historic town.

The first Mass known with certainty to have been celebrated in Monongahela City was on Palm Sunday, 1835, by Rev. John O'Reilly, of St. Paul's, Pittsburg, on which occasion my mother was present; although the holy Sacrifice had been offered up at intervals in a private house some three miles back of the town for several years before for the benefit of a small number of families who lived in that section. Later the town was visited from Brownsville or Pittsburg; but when a resident pastor was appointed for Elizabeth, it was attached to that church, and generally visited on each alternate Sunday. The Catholic population increased very gradually, and it was not until 1865 that a church was thought necessary. It was then undertaken, the corner-stone being laid by Bishop Domenec on the 13th of August. When completed it was dedicated the following year under the title of the Transfiguration; and in every respect it is the counterpart of that at Elizabeth. In course of time the congregation became independent, the first resident pastor being appointed in 1893.

#### GASTONVILLE.

Gastonville is a mining village on the Pittsburg and Wheeling branch of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad a short distance out from Pittsburg, where a little church was built about the year 1894. From the first it was attended from Elizabeth; and, although it is only a few miles across the country, the priest had to come

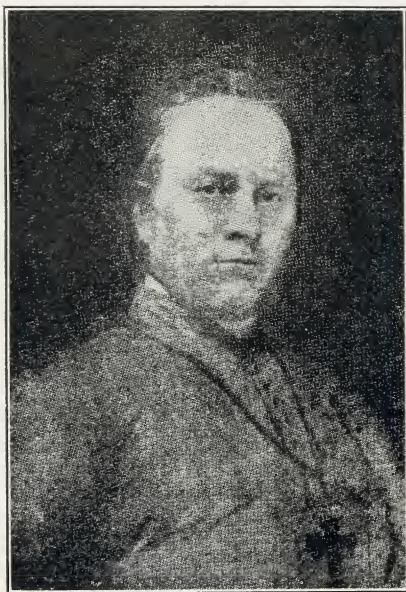




The Boat Was Made and the Coal Mined at Elizabeth, Pa.

to Pittsburg to reach it by rail. He continued to attend it till 1903, when it passed into other hands.

The territory of south-western Pennsylvania, including the valley of the Monongahela, was first under the spiritual jurisdiction of the See of Baltimore; but, on the establishment of the See of Philadelphia, in 1808, it passed to its jurisdiction; and so it remained until the erection of the See of Pittsburg, in August, 1843.



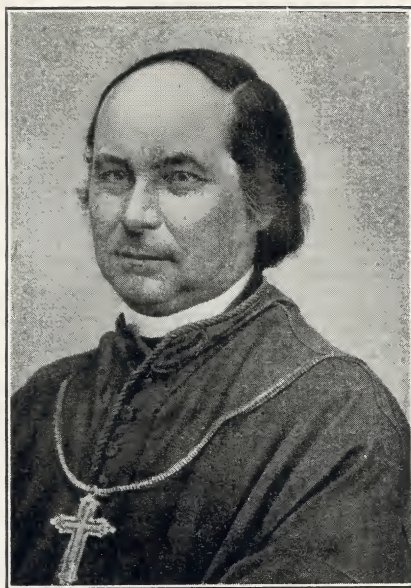
Rt. Rev. Michael O'Connor, D. D.

## **Rt. Rev. Michael O'Connor, D. D.**

FIRST BISHOP OF PITTSBURG.

Michael O'Connor was born in Queenstown, County Cork, Ireland, then called the Cove of Cork, September 27, 1810. He studied in his native land for a time, and then entered the College of the Propaganda, Rome, where he completed his course and passed one of the most brilliant examinations for the doctorate ever made in that famous seat of ecclesiastical learning; and was ordained to the priesthood June 1, 1833. He was immediately made vice-rector of the Irish College and professor of Sacred Scripture in the Propaganda. He was a great favorite of the Pope's, and on account of his linguistic abilities was called "the Pope's linguist." After a time he was recalled to Ireland, and soon after prepared to pass the examination for a vacant professorship of Dogmatic Theology in the College of Maynooth; but was dissuaded from doing so by Bishop F. P. Kenrick of Philadelphia, who prevailed on him to come to his diocese and assume the rectorship of the Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo, which he did in 1839, at the same time doing missionary work on Sundays. But in the middle of June, 1841, he was sent to Pittsburg, as vicar-general of the western part of the state. He wanted, however, to join the Jesuits, and in May, 1843, he set out for Rome to obtain the necessary permission; but a provincial council was held at Baltimore at the same time, when the erection of an episcopal see at Pittsburg was recommended and Dr. O'Connor put forward as the most fitting person to be appointed its first Bishop. Both were approved at Rome; and on the unsuspecting priest presenting himself to the Pope to ask permission to attach himself to the Society of Jesus, he was told that he must consent to be Bishop of Pittsburg, and that he would be a Jesuit



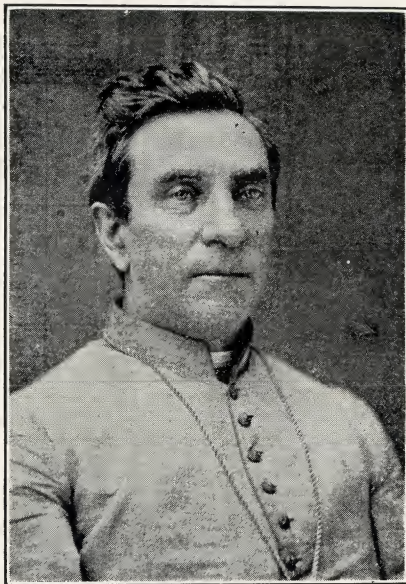


Rt. Rev. Michael Domenec, C. M. D. D.

## **Rt. Rev. Michael Domenec, C. M. D. D.**

SECOND BISHOP OF PITTSBURG.

Michael Domenec was born in the village of Ruez, near the city of Tarragona, Spain, December 27, 1816, and studied for the most part at Paris, where he joined the Lazarists. He came to the United States as a sub-deacon, arriving at the Seminary of the Lazarists, at the Barrens, near St. Louis, February 10, 1838, where he was ordained to the priesthood on the 30th of June of the following year. Having taught and done missionary work in that part of the state of Missouri till 1845, he came with other members of the Congregation to Philadelphia, and took charge of the diocesan seminary. Later they took charge of the congregation of St. Vincent at Germantown, in the same city, where he labored very successfully till his promotion to the See of Pittsburg, September 28, 1860. He was consecrated in the cathedral there on the 9th of December of the same year. Though learned, zealous and laborious, the administration of Bishop Domenec cannot be regarded as entirely successful. He secured the erection of the See of Allegheny January 11, 1876, and had himself transferred thither, Very Rev. John Tuigg, next to be noticed, succeeding him in Pittsburg. But troubles followed him, and he tendered his resignation of Allegheny July 29, 1877, which was accepted on the 3rd of August; and retired to his native country, where he died the death of the just, in the *House of Beneficence*, Tarragona, January 5, 1878. The see of Allegheny was then placed under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Pittsburg, till it was suppressed a short time after.

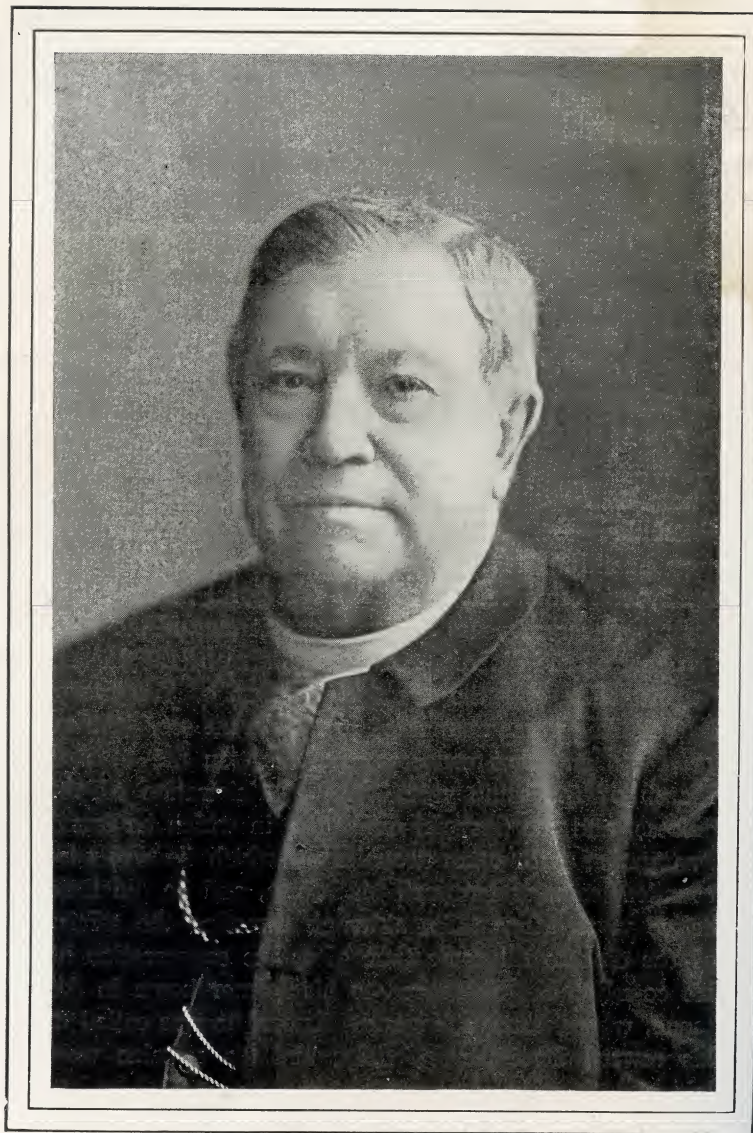


Rt. Rev. John Tuigg, D. D.

**Rt. Rev. John Tuigg, D. D.**

THIRD BISHOP OF PITTSBURG.

John Tuigg was born in Cork, Ireland, February 19, 1820 (some authorities say 1821), and having almost completed his studies, came to Pittsburg in 1849, where he was ordained May 14, 1850. He then taught for a time in the seminary, did missionary work and was secretary to the Bishop till, in the beginning of 1853, when he organized the congregation of St. Brigid's, in the city; but he was transferred from there to the lately organized congregation of St. John, Altoona, in July, where he remained until his promotion to the See of Pittsburg. At first the congregation of Altoona was very small, but as it grew with time he built it up spiritually and temporally in a very successful manner, and for a number of years he was vicar-forane of the eastern part of the diocese. On the division of the diocese of Pittsburg and the erection of that of Allegheny, Father Tuigg was nominated to the parent see, January 11, 1876, and was consecrated Bishop on the 19th of March of the same year. The administration of the diocese, and the financial difficulties in which he found it, together with other troubles by which he was surrounded, soon undermined his health, and he did little active work after 1880, although directing the affairs of the diocese till some time after the consecration of his co-adjutor. He retired to his former home in Altoona, where, after a lingering illness, he was called to his reward December 9, 1889; and his remains were laid to rest in the cemetery of the church which he had served so long and faithfully.



Rt. Rev. Richard Phelan, D. D.

**Rt. Rev. Richard Phelan, D. D.**

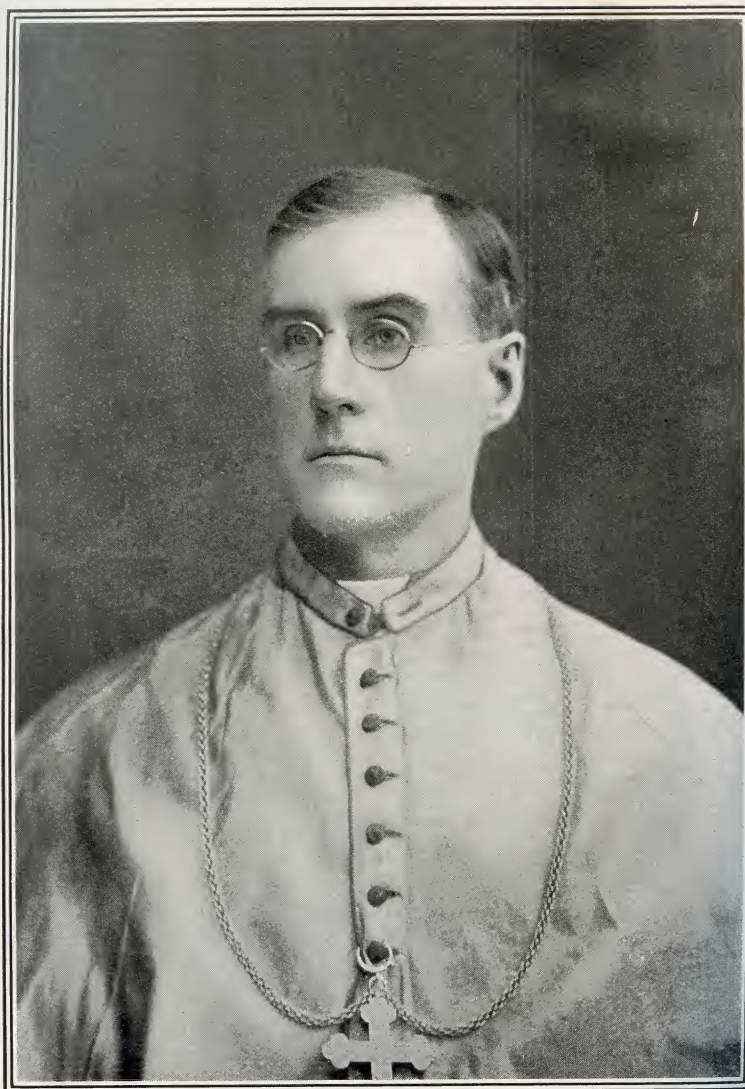
## FOURTH BISHOP OF PITTSBURG.

Richard Phelan was born at Tralee, near Ballyragget, County Kilkenny, Ireland, January 1, 1828, studied for a time at St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny, and came to America near the close of the year 1849 with a number of students for the diocese of Pittsburg; and, although the youngest of their number, they were placed under his care. He continued his course at the diocesan seminary till its close, in the summer of 1851, when he went to St. Mary's, Baltimore, and was ordained at Pittsburg May 4, 1854. After residing mainly at the Cathedral, Pittsburg, and laboring there and on the missions of the Lower Monongahela valley till September, 1858, he was appointed to Freeport, with its numerous missions. Here he remained till July, 1868, when, on the promotion of Very Rev. Tobias Mullen to the See of Erie, he was named rector of St. Peter's Church, Allegheny. Later he was appointed vicar-general of the diocese; and when the health of Bishop Tuigg became so impaired that he required a co-adjutor, Father Phelan was promoted to that office and was consecrated in the cathedral, Pittsburg, August 2, 1885, Bishop of Cibra, and co-adjutor of the Bishop of Pittsburg, with the right of succession. The active administration of the diocese devolved immediately upon him, and soon after that also of the direction of the spiritual and temporal affairs. He resided for a time at his former home in Allegheny, before taking up his residence at the Cathedral in Pittsburg; and upon the death of Bishop Tuigg December 9, 1889, he succeeded to the title of Bishop of Pittsburg. On May 4, 1904, he celebrated the Golden Jubilee of his elevation to the priesthood, amid the universal joy of the diocese and his innum-

able friends, though so much weighed down with the weight of years and incessant toil as to be unable to take any active part in the festivities. Soon after he retired to St. Paul's Orphan Asylum, Idlewood, near Pittsburg, one of the numerous monuments of his zeal, munificence and administrative ability. Here he closed his long, zealous and eminently practical career, and went to receive the reward of the good and faithful servant December 20, 1904, having all but completed his seventy-sixth year. His remains are laid to rest in St. Mary's Cemetery, Pittsburg.

No attempt will be made to enumerate his many successful good works in the cause of religion; but it is no exaggeration to say that in financial and administrative ability he was far superior to all his predecessors in the diocese of Pittsburg taken together. Though finding the country at the time he assumed the administration of the diocese in a very unsettled financial condition, and the Church here sharing too largely in the same state of affairs, he soon succeeded in establishing it on a solider financial foundation than it had ever before occupied.





Rt. Rev. John Francis Regis Canevin, D. D.

### **Present Pastor, Rev. Father Fallon.**

The present pastor was appointed to St. Michael's in April, 1908, succeeding Father M. McCarthy, who labored long and zealously in the parish. A few weeks after his arrival a meeting of the members of the congregation was called as to whether they would be obliged to build a new church or whether it would be worth while to enlarge the old edifice. Upon hearing the opinions of two practical builders, who after carefully examining the structure pronounced the walls to be in excellent condition and the entire building as solid as a rock, and that by enlarging it instead of building a new church the congregation would save a large amount of money, the members by a very great majority decided the better plan would be to take the advice of those practical men. Accordingly, within a month specifications and plans were drawn for the addition and improvements, and, after the regular diocesan requirements had been complied with, the work was commenced in the summer and continued without interruption until its completion in the beginning of the year 1908, and during all that time the old building was used for divine service. Besides adding the thirty feet, the specifications included a brick vestibule, sacristies on each side (so that the structure is now in the form of a **cross**, the true Catholic idea of church architecture), raising the walls and tower, doing away with the flat ceiling and having in its place an arched one, putting on slate roof, copper gutters and crosses (the latter to be covered with gold leaf), basement with toilet rooms and hall for meeting purposes, gas and electric wiring, painting inside and out, wainscoting, presses for cassocks, vestments, etc.

Besides that was put in a steam heating plant, which was erected by the well known firm of McGinnis, Smith

Company, Pittsburg, Pa., and, as usual, their work is A No. 1.

The frescoing, which everyone pronounces to be a work of art, was done by William A. Whitaker of Boston, Mass.

Weldon & Kelly, to the satisfaction of all, installed the electric and gas fixtures.

Petgen Glass Company put in the magnificent windows, and the beautiful Stations of the Cross as well as the statues are the work of Poli Bros., Pittsburg.

The three pretty altars were executed in cream and gold by the Josephinum Church Furniture Company of Columbus, Ohio, and now that the work is done the town of Elizabeth is proud of its little church and with very good reason thinks it is one of the prettiest and most comfortable to be seen anywhere. The people of the parish were from the very beginning most generous in aiding the pastor, both financially and otherwise; indeed, everyone, without exception, seemed to be filled with a spirit of enthusiasm and good will.

Rev. C. A. McDermott, of McKeesport, with whom the writer lived as assistant for six years, made us a present of the main altar.

Mr. and Mrs. John Paeps, of Elizabeth, gave the Stations of the Cross, all with full figures.

Timothy Hester, of Elizabeth, gave the altar railing.

John Hester, of Elizabeth, gave the "St. Peter" window.

Margaret Hester, of Clairton, gave the "Adoring Angels" window, which is a unique piece of workmanship, representing, as it does, two angels adorning the Host, which is placed in a monstrance resting on the clouds. The design was selected by the writer, who adapted it from a picture found in an old Catholic book. What also gives it significance is that its position in the sanctuary (being in the centre) reminds the observant

worshipper that devotion to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is the central act of devotion in our holy religion.

David Burns, of Elizabeth, gave the "St. Paul" window.

Mrs. Isaac Kennedy, formerly of Elizabeth, now of Pittsburg, gave the gold-plated candlesticks on the high altar.

"Good Shepherd" window was given in memory of Patrick and Bridget Maloney.

"Blessed Virgin" window was given in memory of John and Margaret Lambert.

"St. Michael" window was given by Mr. and Mrs. John Paeps.

"St. John the Evangelist" window was given by Mr. and Mrs. John Besentheiner.

"St. Stephen" window was given in memory of Very Rev. S. Wall, D. D., V. G.

"St. Elizabeth" window was given in memory of Thomas and Mary Connelley.

"St. Catharine" window was given in memory of John and Mary Percival.

"St. Veronica" window was given in memory of William and Lydia Lambert.

Stained glass window in rear of church was given in memory of Rev. Francis McCourt, who ministered most attentively to the spiritual wants of the people here for seventeen years.

Another stained glass window was given in memory of the Souls in Purgatory.

A third window was given by the children of the parish and a fourth by Miss Mary Mailey, a former member of the parish.

One of the windows in the priest's sacristy was

West Elizabeth, Jefferson, the right hand side of Calamity, Floreffe, Elrama, Shire Oaks, Coal Bluff, Bunola, Pangburn's Hollow, Blaine, Wylie, Lovedale, Patterson, United No. 2 and Belle Bridge. Before Clairton was formed into a congregation of its own it included a still larger territory, but shortly after the arrival of the present pastor the following notification was received from the Right Rev. Bishop:

**'Limits Between Saint Michael's Parish,  
Elizabeth, Pa., and Saint Clare's  
Parish, Clairton, Pa.**

"Starting at the Pittsburg or western end of St. Clare's parish, the line of division runs along the Monongahela river towards its source till it arrives at the borough line of Clairton (near Connelly's crossing); thence along the said borough line to the right till the brow of the hill at point as seen from the Monongahela river is reached; thence all along the brow of the hill to that point in a ravine called Hogback hollow, where the Scotia and Calamity roads meet; thence along the Calamity road to the Washington county line; all to the right as you proceed to the source of the Monongahela river (or the Uplands, as the territory may be called) should belong to St. Clare's parish; all to the left should belong to St. Michael's parish, or to any other parish whose established lines touch or may touch the above designated lines.

"The above described lines were suggested by Rev. Fathers David Shanahan and Thomas R. Rea, committee appointed for the purpose, and are hereby approved.

"R. CANEVIN,

"Bishop of Pittsburg.

"WM. KITTELL,

"Chancellor.

"Pittsburg, April 12, 1907."

The Church Committee is composed of Francis McNeal, Dennis White and Thomas Hunt, all of whom take a great interest in the spiritual and temporal welfare of the congregation.

The altar boys, all most cheerful and willing lads, are: Top row—Guy Carney, Joseph Lesky, Frank Hunt, Maurice McCarthy Hunt. Lower row—Francis McCarter and Jerome Girt. (Joseph Robino, Peter Romanski, Earl Carney and John Barron joined later on.)

The boys' choir, which sings the Gregorian Mass very creditably, is composed of: Top row—Ed. McCool, Louis Lambert, Perry Weigel, John Elmore, Robbins Weigel, Patrick Hunt, James Cavanaugh. Lower row—Francis McCarter, Julia Hunt (organist), Clarence Weigel.

The children's choir, which fills the church with the music of its sweet voices at the early Mass and at May devotions, etc., is made up of: Top row—Emily Barron, Elizabeth Crookham, Margaret Carney, Teresa Hunt. Second row—Harriet Hunt (organist), Imogene Maloney, Emma Hunt, Madeline Hunt, Anna McNeal, Helen White. Third row—Marie Lambert, Mary McClure, Rose Elmore, Florence Smith, Cornelia Good. Fourth row—Ruth Hunt, Anna Braum, Jeno Slaughter and Mildred Slaughter.

The congregation is at present in a most prosperous condition, comprising about 100 families, not counting the floating population, which always exists in a mining district, and owns a comfortable brick house and lot, a church over 30 by 80 feet, and a beautiful cemetery—may the souls of those whose bodies lie therein and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

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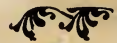
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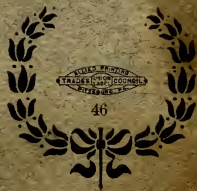
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